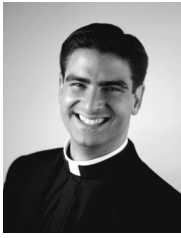


DECEMBER 9 & 10, 2023



Dear Friends in Christ,

As we continue our journey through the season of Advent and light the second candle of our wreath, today's Gospel focuses our attention on John the Baptist, the one who prepared the way for Jesus, the last of the prophets.

John the Baptist appears on the scene in the desert, baptizing people in the Jordan River. To us this might sound like an interesting side fact, but to the Jews of that time, this location would have held great significance. Remember the Exodus story? God freed his people from slavery in Egypt, and led them out into the desert where they ended up wandering for 40 years because of their disobedience – they didn't trust that the God who fought for them and destroyed the Egyptians would fulfill his promise and deliver the Promised Land to them.

When those 40 years of wandering in the desert came to an end, it was at the Jordan River, beyond which was the Promised Land which the Lord was now going to give to the Israelites. The river Jordan was a place that separated sin and penance on one side and reward and blessing on the other. John the Baptist was carrying out his message regarding the necessity of repentance in a place that itself spoke to his audience of both the consequences of sin and the mercy of God.

Another interesting feature of John the Baptist is his choice of camel hair clothing. He wasn't exactly following the latest fashion, even for the first century! But this attire and his diet (of locusts and wild honey) would have reminded his audience of the prophet Elijah. And one of the best-known stories about this prophet was the contest with the prophets of Baal, the conclusion of which was God's triumph, showing that he is truly the Lord God, the only God. Sadly, however, the Israelites turned away from this truth over time, embracing the lifestyle of their neighbors, turning away from the covenant with God, which is how they ended up in exile. It is another reminder of the terrible consequences of sin and the importance of repentance.

Perhaps we feel we don't really need to be reminded that sin can have terrible consequences in our lives. But if we want to prepare and make room in our hearts for Christ, we would do well to heed the call of God's word and examine our consciences, asking ourselves whether we have become too cozy with secular life and what it has to offer at the cost of living a life of holiness and devotion to God. And we can make this examination confident that the Lord is patient and merciful toward his children, that he desires our salvation, and has gone to incredible lengths to extend this gift to us. All we need to do is open our hearts to him.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Fr. Marco

EVENTS CALENDAR

Mon: 6:30 pm
Thurs: 12 pm
Sun: After Mass

December 11 — December 17

Advent Reflection
Funeral for Rosan Lara
Fellowship Sunday

IHM YOUTH CHRISTMAS CHOIR Want to sing with the angels at the 5 pm Christmas Eve Mass and the play starting at 4:30 pm beforehand? All the children of the parish are welcome to join the choir for the Pageant and the Mass. Their next rehearsal is Sunday, December 17 at 3 pm. Dress rehearsal is on Friday, December 22 at 5:30 pm. Contact Mary at 240-434-8876 or mary@ihmrcc.org. You can also sign up on the list by the Music Room Office in the hallway. Parents, please leave good contact information.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PAGEANT We are seeking volunteers to assist with and actors to participate in with this year's Children's Christmas Pageant on Christmas Eve. If interested, call the Children's Faith Formation office at 301-863-8793 or Kayla Krause at 814-233-1685. Following are the dates for the pageant:

December 17 at 3:00 pm, Rehearsal
December 22 at 5:30 pm, Dress rehearsal
December 24 at 4:30 pm, Christmas pageant

MODIFIED MASS SCHEDULE On the morning of Sunday, December 24th, there will be no 8:30 am or 11:15 am Mass. Instead, there will be a single Mass at 10 am.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES The Mass times for Christmas are as follows: Sunday, December 24 at 5:00 pm, Monday, December 25 at 12 am, 10 am, and 1 pm in Spanish.

PRAYER CHAIN The Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Shrine has a prayer line where you can talk and pray with someone over the phone. The prayer line is open Monday through Friday from 10 am to 5 pm. Call 1-866-202-4934.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY MASS This year Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala will celebrate the Annual Wedding Anniversary Mass to honor the Vocation of Marriage on Saturday, February 10, 2024, 10:00 a.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. This Annual Mass is a celebration of the living vocation of all couples who provide a Catholic witness to the beauty of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Couples must register with the parish office by January 27, 2024 to attend the Mass and/or receive a certificate from Cardinal Wilton Gregory in honor of their anniversary year.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS Intentions

December 11 — December 17

Monday	Is 35:1-10/Ps 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14/ Lk 5:17-26
9:00 am	Anna Boyle Gannon (D)
Tuesday	Zec 2:14-17/Judith 13:18BCDE, 19/ Lk 1:26-38
5:30 pm	James Baker (L)
Wednesday	Is 40:25-31/Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10/ Mt 11:28-30
9:00 am	Rev. George A. Wilkinson (D)
Thursday	Is 41:13-20/Ps 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab/ Mt 11:11-15
5:30 pm	Jose Ortiz (D)
Friday	Is 48:17-19/Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6/ Mt 11:16-19
9:00 am	Sean Eric Moran (D)
Saturday	Sir 48:1-4, 9-11/Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18- 19/Mt 17:9a, 10-13
9:00 am	Nelia Gonzalez Tyler (D)
4:00 pm	Carol Anne Bush (D)
Sunday	Is 61:1-2A, 10-11/Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54/1 Thes 5:16-24/Jn 1:6-8, 19-28
8:30 am	Mickey Dempsey (D)
11:15 am	John "Kelly" Cutchember (D)
1:00 pm	All IHM Parishioners

ADVENT REFLECTION Dcn. Ronnie Chavez will give a reflection titled "The Value of the Little: The Incarnation and the Eucharist" at 6:30 pm on Monday, December 11 in the church. The reflection will be accompanied with Eucharistic Exposition.

WARM NIGHTS Great News! Immaculate Heart of Mary will once again be hosting the WARM Nights guests from the evening of January 14 through the morning of January 21. We are in need of monitors for three shifts through the night and a hot breakfast and dinner each day. Please prayerfully consider volunteering to serve the homeless of St. Mary's County. If you would like additional information or want to sign up, contact Marcie McLaughlin at (240) 298-1462.

FORMED To sign up for Formed, the premier site to access Catholic Media online, go to www.formed.org and press "sign up" and then enter the ZIP code of the parish "20653", follow the directions to create an account, and then enjoy!

MASS WITH HEALING PRAYERS This month's Mass with Healing Prayers is at 7 pm on Monday, December 18. After Mass, we will have Eucharistic Adoration and prayers for healing with laying on of hands. Confessions begin at **6:00 pm** and continue as long as there are penitents.

HOW CAN WE PREPARE? Advent is a time of preparing for the Lord's coming - not only as our Child Savior at Christmas, but also as the Ruler King either at the end of our lives or at the end of the world, whichever comes first. How can we prepare by living in a radically selfless way as Jesus, in Jesus, and for Jesus right now? Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all. 'Watch!'" (Mk 13:33a, 36-37)

MASS INTENTIONS may be requested at the parish office during regular office hours (M—F, 8 am—4 pm) in person or by phone (301-863-8144 x11), or by e-mailing julian@ihmrcc.org. Your desired date may not be available. We now have the ability to accept Mass intention stipends online (but only **after** the date has been accepted by the office).



PLEASE PRAY THAT THE SICK MAY BE RESTORED TO FULL HEALTH

Audrey Somers, Kathleen Floyd, Jane Kenyon, Linda F. Gieser, Ralph Gough Sr., Betty LePore, Joseph, Rylee Corliss, Alan Stapanon, Ruby Garcia, Mia Garcia, Matthew Riddell, Marie C. Williams, Kaylee Klier, Wanda Slater, Enedina Melendez, Hector Perez, Josephine, Glenn Thompson III, John Worrell, Jim Makin, Carmen Colby, Gary Green, Grace Miedzinski, Bruce Riddell, Katelyn Corliss, Robert Weaver, Devlin Rich, Ana Gates, Dennis Berg, Alejandra Spargo, Lisa and Paul Crowe, Adele Bavani, Violette Ghalbouny, Helen Pearson, John Flynn, Michael Briscoe, Patricia A. Louis, Susan Marie Hollis, Norma Jean Jubeck, Melva Coates, Frances Roof, Jayne C., Dcn. Barnes

Please note: names will remain on this list for two months, unless otherwise notified. To keep a name on the list, please resubmit by contacting bulletin@ihmrcc.org, or call the Parish Office.

PAPAL PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

Follow us on



INCENSE (from *Sacred Signs*, by Fr. Romano Guardini, 1927)

"I saw an angel come and stand before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, and the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel." So writes Saint John in the mysterious book of the Apocalypse (or Revelation 8:3-4).

The offering of incense is a generous and beautiful rite. The bright grains of incense are laid upon the red-hot charcoal, the censer is swung, and the fragrant smoke rises in clouds. In the rhythm and the sweetness there is a musical quality; and like music also is the entire lack of practical utility: it is a prodigal waste of precious material. It is a pouring out of unwithholding love.

When the Lord was at supper, "Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil." (Jn 12:3) Narrower spirits objected. "Why this waste?" But the Son of God has spoken, "Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial." (Jn 12:7) Mary's anointing was a mystery of death and love and the sweet fragrance of sacrifice.

The offering of incense is like Mary's anointing at Bethany. It is as free and objectless as beauty. It burns and is consumed like love that lasts through death. And the arid soul still takes his stand and asks the same question: What is the good of it?

It is the offering of a sweet fragrance which Scripture itself tells us is the prayers of the Saints. Incense is the symbol of prayer. Like pure prayer it has in view no object of its own; it asks nothing for itself. It rises like the Gloria at the end of a psalm in adoration and thanksgiving to God for his great glory.

It is true that symbolism of this sort may lead to mere aestheticism. There are imaginations in which the fragrant clouds of incense induce a spurious religiosity; and, in such instances, when it does so, the Christian conscience does right to protest that prayer should be made in spirit and in truth. But though prayer is a plain, straight-forward business, it is not the so-much-for-so-muchness which the ungenerous imagination and fleshless heart of the religious Philistine would make of it. The same spirit persists that produced the objection of Judas Iscariot. Prayer is not to be measured by its bargaining power; it is not a matter of bourgeois common sense.

Minds of this order know nothing of that magnanimous prayer that seeks only to give. Prayer is a profound act of worship, that asks neither why nor wherefore. It rises like beauty, like sweetness, like love. The more there is in it of love, the more of sacrifice. And when the fire has wholly consumed the sacrifice, a sweet fragrance ascends.

GRIEVING WITH GREAT HOPE A 5-week, small group workshop to help people grieving the loss of a loved one. The Workshop will be Sundays from 3 pm until 5 pm from January 7th to February 4th, 2024 at St. Aloysius in Leonardtown. For more information, please contact Jennifer Bicknell at 301-475-8064, ext. 11 or jbicknell@saintalloysiuschurch.org. You can sign up online at <https://www.saintalloysiuschurch.org>.

SIM BANG GABI MASS IHM is hosting a Sim Bang Gabi mass on Monday, December 18 at 6 am. There will be a breakfast reception following the Mass.

CHURCH CHRISTMAS DECORATING HELP Seeking assistance from family and friends! Join us on Monday, December 18 at 10 am to bring decorations down from the loft, and on Saturday, December 23 at 10 am to decorate the church. Your help makes the process quick and enjoyable. To participate, please reach out to Pat DeCarlo at 240-925-0021 or Linda Hidalgo at 240-298-5264. We look forward to your support!



YOUR VOICES ARE NEEDED If you can read music and like to sing, please consider joining one of our groups that serve the Masses at IHM. The Adult Choir is in need of all voice parts – High School singers welcome! Youth Singers can serve at the 11:15 Mass on the 1st Sunday of the Month. There is also a Men's Choir and a Women's Choir that serve once a month. There are other groups as well! Contact Mary at 240-434-8876.

CRAFT GROUP MEETING CANCELLED IHM's craft group meeting on Wednesday, December 14 is cancelled.

ALTAR FLOWERS/SANCTUARY CANDLES If you would like to donate the Altar Flowers or Sanctuary Candles in memory or for special intentions of a loved one, please call the Parish Office or email at cindy@ihmrcc.org.

PERPETUAL ADORATION Did you know our very own Immaculate Heart of Mary offers you the opportunity to participate in Perpetual Adoration? Some may ask "What is Perpetual Adoration?" Perpetual Adoration is a Eucharistic devotion whereby members unite in the adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament with the goal of adoring The Blessed Sacrament perpetually (24 hours a day). If you are interested, please call our adoration coordinator, Jeff Harmon, at 240-538-5017 or email adoration@ihmrcc.org for more information.

BULLETIN DEADLINE Please email your submission to bulletin@ihmrcc.org by Wednesday at 10 am prior to the Sunday of publication. All entries are subject to editing.

December 10, 2023

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Second Sunday of Advent

Is 40:1-5, 9-11 | 2 Pt 3:8-14 | Mk 1:1-8

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Can you hear it? The voice crying out in the desert? While John the Baptist was the one literally proclaiming, from the desert, the coming of the Lord, we should listen for echoes of his message today. John foretold that Jesus – the Father’s Incarnate Son – was on his way to redeem the world. Through Jesus’ passion and death, the gates of heaven were flung open so all who believe in him would have eternal life. This is the Good News he proclaimed then, and the Church proclaims today: *Christ has come! Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again.* This is what we prepare for in Advent – to celebrate, on Christmas day, Christ’s coming into the world, and that he will one day return in glory. The Lord gives comfort to his people in his words, and in his presence to us in the Eucharist: “According to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” So, trust in the Lord, remain vigilant, and take heed of the voices that remind us to “prepare the way of the Lord.”

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Each year, we are given the gift of Advent. It is a season that invites us to slow down, reflect on the gift of Jesus and prepare to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. Ironically, though, it happens at one of the most frenzied times of the year as we rush to keep up with cookie baking, tree decorating and merry-making. Advent is short – it includes four Sundays but can be three to four weeks long depending on the weekday upon which Christmas falls – and it sometimes doesn’t seem long enough to truly prepare our hearts. This year Advent is three weeks and a day – so we are close to reaching the midway point, which is a good time to ask ourselves: How tuned in are we to John the Baptist’s message? If we feel like we’re being carried along in a wave of consumerism, it’s not too late to make a course correction. We can step away from the fray and carve out time to enjoy the stillness of Advent and truly listen to the voice crying out in the desert.

SING *Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the rose, is on the way.*

*“Prepare the
way of the Lord,
make straight
his paths.”
(Mk 1:3)*